

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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DONATION \$1

THE U.S. BUDGET: GUNS NOT BUTTER

See Cover Story on Page 3



Sherri Williams (left) was homeless and in declining health when this photo was taken. She died less than a month later. Sherri lived in the Parkside Drive area of Fresno, California, where Carissa Phelps (right) was sexually exploited when she was 12 years old. If Carissa had stayed on the mean streets of Fresno, the chances are that she too would have died at an early age. Sherri was only 45 years old. See page 5 for more.

PHOTO/MARK RHODES

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Two candidates, and the winner remains corporate America

With the exit of John Edwards the day after the Super Tuesday primaries last month, we now find ourselves with two Democratic Party candidates contesting to be President of the United States – U.S. Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. While space doesn’t allow for a thorough comparison of their respective programs (or lack thereof) on the many issues and needs that confront the majority of the American people, a short examination of the national health care crisis, the growing need for a comprehensive solution and a comparison of these two candidates’ positions on how they plan to address that crisis is worthy of consideration.

According to a recent investigative study by Consumer Reports, nearly 47 million Americans, 16% of the population, had no health care insurance and another 70 million (24%) were determined to be underinsured, which the study defined as having “inadequate access to healthcare.” That’s 40% of the US population! These disastrous statistics define a severe and growing crisis in access to healthcare, not to mention the rapid deterioration in the quality of care and delivery of medical services to those who actually have healthcare insurance. At the same time, health insurance premiums have increased 87 % over the past 10 years, enabling the nation’s six biggest private health insurers to collectively amass \$11 billion in profits in just 2006 alone.

Both Clinton and Obama have healthcare insurance proposals that will further enrich the health insurance industry. Clinton’s insurance coverage proposal will require nearly 45 million uninsured to make monthly co-payments into a government subsidized program that is projected to cost taxpayers \$124 billion per year, according to MIT economist Jonathon Gruber. Her proposed plan makes enrollment and co-payments mandatory for 45 million uninsured. Enforcement will occur by either imposing monthly cash penalties, tax penalties or even garnishing the wages of those who don’t enroll in her mandated insurance plan.

Obama’s proposal will cover 23 to 30



million of those currently uninsured, at a taxpayer cost of nearly \$102 billion or more, depending on voluntary enrollment, according to the same Gruber study. His proposal requires government payments to the health insurance industry to provide coverage for all uninsured children and voluntary enrollment for uninsured adults who, if they choose to enroll, would make monthly co-payments for coverage in a government subsidized health insurance plan.

We should not be surprised that each candidate has a proposal that promises to further enrich the health insurance industry with windfall profits. Both candidates answer to the corporations that currently run all levels of our government. And it’s not an accident that the campaigns of both candidates are receiving handsome contributions from corporate America.

Neither proposal speaks to the actual quality of care that people will receive. Clearly, those workers in medium to low-wage jobs, and those who don’t have jobs from which the corporations can make a profit, are not going to receive the same quality of medical care as do Clinton and Obama. Just as there is a new and growing class of poverty-

wage workers and dispossessed on one economic pole, there exists a small capitalist class, with its elite political leaders on the other pole. And the economic middle is not holding onto its middle ground. It’s being forced into the new and growing class of dispossessed. These are two very different Americas with two very different qualities of healthcare delivery.

Increased access to some sort of healthcare and the receipt of quality healthcare are also two very different things. Access to quality healthcare will continue to be denied to increasing numbers of the American people, while the profits of the insurance industry will continue to soar unimpeded, unless the vast majority of the American people demand otherwise. As a 21st century people, living in a new epoch of electronic based automation, we are capable of building a new society. The political tactic today of organizing around a national, government, single-payer healthcare program of universal quality care, that eliminates the health insurance industry middle-men, is being embraced by growing numbers of the American people. That tactic points the way to building a new 21st century American society.

The People’s Tribune is devoted to the proposition that an economic system that can’t or won’t feed, clothe and house its people ought to be and will be changed. To that end, this paper is a tribune of the people. It is the voice of millions struggling for survival. It strives to educate politically those millions on the basis of their own experience. It is a tribune to bring them together, to create a vision of a better world, and a strategy to achieve it.

We find ourselves at a historic moment as labor-replacing technology leads us on a path toward the decisive reconstruction of society. Who will win — the capitalists or the growing mass of poor — will depend on winning the hearts and minds of the people to create a society whose fruits benefit all.

We offer our pages as a vehicle for the new ideas rooted in our reality, and to be the voice of those who seek to raise the consciousness of society. Let us gather our collective experience, intelligence and commitment to bring forth a vision that changes America into a society “by the people, of the people, for the people.”

PEOPLE’S TRIBUNE EDITORIAL POLICY: Articles that are unsigned, such as the front page and editorials, reflect the views of the editorial board. Bylined articles reflect the views of the authors, and may or may not reflect the views of the editorial board.

Deadlines for articles and art: The deadline for articles, photographs and other art is the first of each month for the issue that comes out at the beginning of the following month. For example, the deadline for the June issue is May 1. Articles should be as short as possible, and no longer than 600 words. We reserve the right to edit articles to conform to space limitations.

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The U.S. Budget: Guns, Not Butter

"Budget" is one of the most important words in our language. No business, no government, no expedition could possibly exist without a careful allocation of funds. A budget clearly reflects what is considered important. What would you think of the head of a family that allocated 50% of its income to gambling and entertainment and 10% for the welfare of the children? You would probably call the police or ask the social services to protect the children from the parents. You better pick up the phone, because that is exactly

‘The proposed budget would total \$2.3 Trillion. Fifty-one percent of that is going to the military.’

A recent article in the New York Times points out that "discretionary" domestic spending — which is everything outside national security and entitlement programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid — is falling to historic lows as a proportion of the overall economy, roughly 3 percent or less. The proposed new budget eliminates or sharply cuts back most of these programs. The budget sharply cuts back on the home heating assistance. How are the poor to survive these harsh winters? Some Americans are already relying on the grace of President Chavez and the government of Venezuela for that assistance.

There is a sharp cut back in education funding. Our educational system is disintegrating. The government has practically given up on education in the poor neighborhoods. In a 2003 study conducted by UNICEF the researchers ranked the United States No. 18 out of 24 nations in terms of the relative effectiveness of its educational system. The ruling class never fails to remind us that we are the richest most powerful nation in world history. They seldom tell us that we fall behind South Korea or Hungary in the education of our youth. Embarrassed by the poor showing of American students in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study in 1995, the government refused to participate in any further study or competition on the matter. If the youth are the future of our country — somebody better do something.

Unable to attack Medicare and Medicaid head on, the new budget simply reduces the payments to hospitals and doctors. This is the capitalist system,

and no matter how sympathetic or moral the doctors or staff — they simply cannot spend the hospital’s resources on people who cannot pay. In other words people dying in the corridors of hospitals or the dumping of paraplegics into the gutter because they have no health insurance is going to become more common than it already is.

The proposed budget would total \$2,387,000,000,000. Fifty-one percent of that, or \$1,228,000,000,000 (one trillion two hundred twenty eight billion) is going to the military. If the numbers sound confusing remember that one trillion seconds equals 1,688 years. A trillion seconds ago, Emperor Constantine of Rome built the basilica over the tomb of St. Peter. That was a hundred years before the fall of Rome.

So where has all the money gone?

The war in Iraq is costing over \$200,000,000 every day. Does that money just disappear or does it go into

someone's pocket? Where do you think these billionaires came from? When you visualize this amount of money you see why they can't stop the war. The deaths, the shattered bodies, the ruined lives are, for them "collateral damage." For us, it is our sons and daughters.

It must be understood that this budget and its consequences are not someone's

bad idea. It is the inevitable outcome of the corporate takeover of the government. Unless fundamental changes are made in the economic system this is just the beginning of the American version of Hitler's declaration to the German people — You will get guns, not butter.



Housing Protest. PHOTO/HARVEY FINKLE

Help Us Continue Telling the Truth

Those of us who seek fundamental social change are engaged in a battle to win the hearts and minds of the people. This can't be done without a revolutionary press. Every month, the People's Tribune strives to bring our readers the stories of those who are struggling to move forward in a world where corporate power is threatening to crush them. Along with those stories, we try to offer some strategic perspective to help put the struggle in context and point the way toward victory. We need your help to continue doing

this. The People's Tribune gets no grants and has an all-volunteer staff. We rely completely on subscriptions and donations from our readers to enable us to go on telling the truth. Please donate whatever you can. See the subscription/donation form at the bottom of this page. You can also donate using Pay Pal on our web site, <http://www.peopletribune.org>.

People’s Tribune Editorial Board

Why Revolutionaries Need a Press
From the Editors

We are sometimes asked “Why do revolutionaries need a press?” The answer has to do with this moment in history. Historical forces beyond anyone's control have set the stage for a new society to be built, but from this point on, how things turn out depends on what people think. This means that those of us who are seeking fundamental change are engaged in a battle of ideas, a struggle to win the hearts and minds of the people. If we don’t raise the consciousness of the people and unite them around a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it, then we’ll fail in our effort to build a just and free society. To win the battle of ideas, we need a press.

Visit us on the web at www.peopletribune.org

Former Homeless Man.....Making A Difference For JESUS!

By Lenette Evans

Jeff Robinson, of Benton Harbor, knows all to well what its like to live in poverty and homelessness. He experienced the horrible trauma of a broken shattered family when his parents divorced. He always wanted a family that was like the "Brady Bunch" type. But that dream would come to an end because of alcohol and violence and his parent’s divorce.

Jeff’s Mother taught the importance of going to church every Sunday and her boys conducting themselves as "Gentlemen." Jeff’s Mother worked hard to pay bills and put food on the table, which wasn't easy as she had several children to raise. Jeff, the oldest, was responsible for taking care of his siblings while his Mother worked. In

high school he was called names and in his teenage years he started to feel rebellious of his teachings and no longer wanted to please God or his Mother.

In 1972, he began smoking marijuana. Older adults told him it would lead to harder stuff. But he thought "How bad could it really be? After all my favorite recording artists used it and endorsed it." But because of it he struggled through high school. As his grades failed, his best friend turned him on to the Army and when he got in the military he signed up to go to Germany! His first day he smoked hash with an Army resident and later on ended up marrying and having two children together.

It wasn't long until drugs and alcohol led to divorce. Jeff was later detained in an airport in Germany and arrested for possession of marijuana. He was kicked out of the military and sentenced to nine months in military prison. Even after losing his career, wife, kids, and family the drugs escalated and he was

now using heroin, LSD, and crack cocaine.

He spent time in rehab and ended up leaving with no home to go to. For the first time he had become HOMELESS. "You either became the predator or the prey," he said. At one point he saw a man die of a cocaine induced heart failure. His life on the streets was eating out of dumpsters, sleeping in doorways, under bridges and getting beat up and a gun stuck to his head. After another "lick" of cocaine he ended up robbing a store and going to prison.

Jeff knows that in Berrien County that there are many other people living in poverty and homelessness because there are NO JOBS in Benton Harbor. He himself fell in the cracks of society and became homeless and was addicted to drugs and alcohol which contributed to his circumstances. His children and family were affected that he loved. He finally turned to God who became real in his life after his brother Pastor Michael Robinson helped lead him to a

better spiritual life of helping other people. Jeff goes to "FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD " in St. Joseph, Michigan. He has a deep love and compassion in helping his brothers and sisters who suffer from drugs, alcohol, mental illness and are homeless. The Lord helped him out of his circumstance and showed him a better life and he knows if he can pull himself up and that he can make a godly difference in helping others in his community.



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There Should Be No Poor Among You
 by Sandy Perry

All of us who labor in homeless ministries know first-hand the individual stories of those who battle homelessness. What we frequently do not see, because the corporate media deliberately hides it, are the systemic causes and the economic and political decisions that create homelessness in the first place.

Since 1978, the Federal HUD housing budget has been cut by 65% -- a total of 54 billion in constant dollars. America as a result has a shortage of five million extremely low-income housing units today.

Mass homelessness as we know it did not even exist in America from the end of the Great Depression through the late 1970s. It is not an act of God, not an eternal condition, and not a mystery. It is a calculated, evil, bipartisan government policy based on the fact that the capitalist system, with its labor

replacing technology, no longer needs workers and therefore will not provide for their welfare. It is time for people to rise up.

The individual suffering of the homeless is cruel and unnecessary, but it need not be in vain. The homeless, formerly homeless, unemployed, and all their supporters can pool together our individual moral struggles and strengths. We can inspire and help build a social and political movement to create a system that abolishes homelessness, poverty, and unemployment forever.

The Bible says there should be no poor among us, because God has blessed us with such a rich land and resources. The only question is whether we the people will obey his commands and fight for a system that distributes our wealth equitably.

Public Housing to be Demolished — Homeless Subject to Arrest

By Ted Quant

Former residents and activists rallied in front of the St. Bernard Public Housing development in New Orleans on February 16 to continue the fight to stop Columbia Residential's demolition and redevelopment plans. Sharon Jasper, a former resident, condemned the corruption and political games being played with people's lives. Residents have a proposal that offers more housing, more jobs and savings than the Columbia proposal The Columbia proposal is a sweetheart deal because Columbia owes HUD Secretary Alfonse Jackson \$250,000 to \$500,000. Carlton, a homeless worker who lives under the Interstate 10 overpass, said, "Give us one of these buildings and the materials and there are enough skilled homeless workers to renovate these ourselves. There is plenty work to be done and we can do it." Speakers also condemned the mayor for declaring he would begin enforcing the city's "public habitation" ordinance — a law where homeless people will face arrest simply because they are living in the only affordable place: the city’s public rights of way. Given the dire shortage of New Orleans low-income housing, this law all but guarantees that thousands of people will be jailed for the "crime" of not having enough money for housing. Justice demands that people join together to stop the City's plan to criminalize New Orleans’ homeless and to fight for more public and affordable housing now.



Sharon Jasper speaking at the rally in front of the St. Bernand housing development
PHOTO/TED QUANT

Carissa Phelps Seeks Justice

By Mike Rhodes

Editors note: This is a shortened version of a longer story that appears at <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2008/02/12/18478719.php>

Carissa Phelps was 12 years old when she was forced into prostitution on the mean streets of Fresno. Carissa’s mom had taken her to Juvenile Hall as an "out of control" youth. She ran away, eventually living with the families of friends, cleaning house and watching younger children. She did not attend school. Carissa said her friends uncle "put his arm around me and said I’m going to take care of you and you’re going to take care of me. I was terrified of him, I knew he was a drug dealer, but I thought I had to follow along. I was 12 years old and just a baby.”

Carissa Phelps has returned to Fresno to put a spotlight on the sexual exploitation of youth, which she says is still happening today. She says "it was really easy to be abused. All I was looking for was love and attention." "He took me to a hotel. I tried to get out of the window in the bathroom, but it was too small. I then had sex with him, it was the worst experience of my life. This was sup-



Carissa Phelps. PHOTO/MIKE RHODES

posed to be someone who could be trusted, an adult."

The first person she met after leaving the hotel was Shondra, a prostitute, Shondra’s pimp took Carissa into a world where she was sold for sex, raped, and sold for crack cocaine. Carissa said,"I wanted to die." She said she gets asked why she didn’t go to the police. "They were seen like the enemy." When a police officer did pick her up, Carissa says, "He did not take me to a hospital where I should have gone and be treated for rape and trauma. He took

me to jail."

It was in Juvenile Hall where things started to turn around. Teachers helped her study Algebra and get rape counseling and therapy. She soon attended a continuation high school and then college. "When I went to law school I was trying to change what happened to me from happening to someone else. I always knew, when I was 12 years old, that if I made it out of this that I would come back and shine a spotlight on that little 12 year old girl, that is walking down the street that is scared and alone, so that the right people can see her and help her and the wrong people won’t be able to get her so easily."

"I thought I could change the world with law. I realized, that laws can change and things stay the same on the ground." She asked, "how could I actually change the system? Why is it big money and big corporations that are controlling us? She went to business school and later left a coveted job in a private equity fund. Carissa came back to Fresno. She wanted to come back to Motel Drive and tell the story."

Her documentary (<http://www.carissaproject.com>) will be touring at movie festivals around the country and in

places where at risk youth can see it.

Since her return, Carissa has been involved in community organizing. She says, “You can drive down to Motel Drive today and find children, ages 12 - 17 that are being sexually exploited. These young girls are going back to pimps that are beating them up, choking them, telling them they are worthless pieces of crap. If that was happening to children, or even adults in a workplace, we would stand up and do something about it.”

We Need Your Photos!

The People’s Tribune relies on readers to contribute photos. This paper has a lot more impact when the articles are accompanied by photos of the events described and of people in struggle against the system. High-resolution digital photos are best; e-mail them to info@peopletribune.org.

You can send hard copies of photos to us at the P.O. box listed on page 2.

Homeless Woman Dies a Needless Death

By Al Williams

Editor's note: Sherri Williams was a participant in the class action lawsuit against the City of Fresno to stop them from taking and immediately destroying homeless peoples property. Her husband Al has been a leader in the struggle for homeless peoples rights.

FRESNO, CA On December 20, 2007, my wife Sherri Williams passed away. It is my opinion, and the opinion of others concerned, that she died a needless death, at the very young age of 45 years old, because of inadequate health care. This problem must be fixed now. I don’t mean hire some firm for \$150,000 or more to study the problem, I mean it’s time to GET-ER-DONE now. We the homeless, the dis-placed, the poor, are sick and tired, of being sick and tired. Myself, among others, blame local government, starting at the top, with Mayor Autry, the City Council, their hired buddies, and please don’t leave out Larry Arce, and the Rescue Mission, and lately the Poverello House.



Al Williams with wife Sherri, homeless and in a wheelchair, was arrested and cited for using a bathroom at McDonald’s. PHOTO/MIKE RHODES

Let me explain, starting with adequate health care. Community Hospital receives \$20,000,000 a year, if not more from other donations to provide adequate health care for the homeless, the displaced, the poor. I ask you this ques-

tion. Why are people such as Sherri Williams, who was homeless the last two years of her life, handicapped, confined to a wheelchair because of a pro-lapsed rectum, and uterus, declining health, because of her condition, refused medical care, which resulted in her death?

On Sherri’s previous three visits to Community Hospital, doctors attempted to get her into surgery, but the big bosses at Community Hospital, who tell doctors what they can and cannot do, or putting it

in lay term, who will live, and who will die, refused to grant Sherri the surgery she needed to save her life.

What they did was discharge Sherri, with an open wound, (prolapsed rectum), into a open dirt field, with no

shelter, except a sleeping bag, and yes, she became ill once again, with an infection in her intestine’s, which could have been repaired had the proper surgery been done. Now Sherri is no longer with us. I now ask you this. Don’t doctors take an oath to save lives? And if so, why are supervisors ordering doctors to go against this oath? Personally, I feel that it is time for some replacements of the supervisors, period. Does the mighty dollar override human life? That is not the oath of a doctor. So, what are we going to do? I say, GET UP, STAND UP, FOR YOUR RIGHTS. Let us not have any more needless deaths .

Therefore, starting on the 16th of February at Roeding Park after Food Not Bombs at 2:00 PM, we will have a weekly workshop to end homelessness now, not in ten years. All interested people, homeless and otherwise are invited, especially homeless advocates.

Women in the Forefront of the Struggle

Interview with leader of Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign

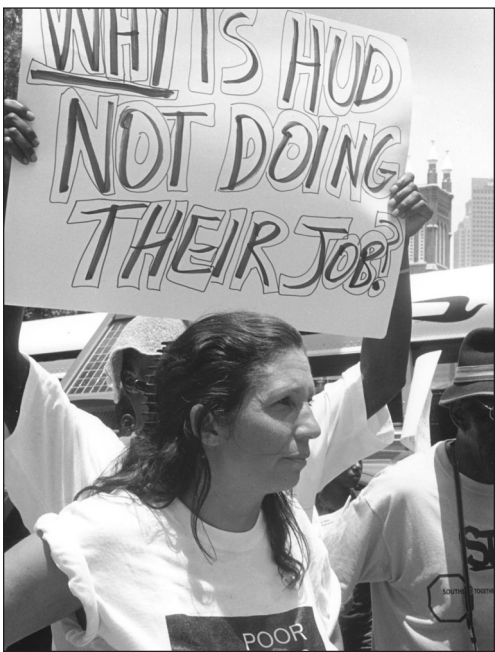
By Sandy Reid

People's Tribune: Cheri, tell us about America's new poverty

Cheri Honkala: I've been working with low income families across the U.S. for about twenty years. The volume of poverty is out of control. We used to get families here and there. Now families are doubling and quadrupling up in homes together. In any of our major cities every other property is vacant because of foreclosures. In rural America, farmers that have had their farms handed down from one generation to another now work two or three jobs. Most farms have been taken over by huge multinational corporations. The situation is devastating all over the place. The band-aid solutions of social service programs don't work. So for the large numbers of new poor that are being created as a result of the jobs that

are not coming back, there is devastation. In the large urban areas we're seeing a direct correlation with the absolute proliferation of drugs that are cheap and accessible and the large numbers of families that are going to jail as a result of the criminalization of poverty. As a diversion, immigrants are being made into the new enemy and being held responsible for all of the problems of a failing system. So, we're trying to figure out how to link all these different sections of the population. The good news is that the reality of something bigger needing to happen in this country is beginning to awaken more people. That is the hopeful aspect. It's not hard to explain that this thing is coming in everybody's direction, so a bigger and better social welfare system is not the answer. And it's clear that it won't be the Democratic Party that will save them.

PT: Tell us about your upcoming activ-



Cheri Honkala.

PHOTO/HARVEY FINKLE

ities at the Republican convention protests **Cheri:** Once again the Poor Peoples Economic Human Rights Campaign intends to organize the largest poor peoples march ever during the Republican Convention in Minneapolis. In August, 2008, we'll have a month-long bus tour throughout Minnesota, collecting human rights documentation, and then a reality tour. A Minnesota Truth Commission will say what people see as a solution and who is responsible for what is happening in the country. There will be a national arts and culture event, an anti-war event, and a National Truth Commission. On September 2 we'll have our third National March for Our Lives. There will also be traveling caravans from North, South, East and West with a special focus on art and culture to the growing movement against poverty. People can connect up through our new web site at <http://www.economichumanrights.org>

in a couple of weeks. **PT:**What new ideas do you teach? **Cheri:**We teach that our country has an abundance, that we are human beings, and our government has a responsibility to provide all of these things for residents of this country as a basic human right. We find it's a lot easier to deal with stereotypes now — about poor people being lazy and irresponsible and not having work ethics — because there is a much broader section of people not knowing where they are going to live. People are also seeing that elected officials haven't been able to stop the foreclosures or help them when their family needs health insurance. People are understanding that something else has to be done. Some are excited about a Black man or a women potentially being president. I know that soon after whoever is elected, people will come to see that it has much more to do with a system based around greed and not human need. The problems will continue to exist, whoever becomes president. The main thing is to link up and form the kinds of organizations that are going to be able to withstand this horrible storm and come up with a plan for a better world. The other important thing is to go beyond the misleaders that have great rhetoric but who are doing nothing. People need to look at who is saying what and what they actually do with their time and money.



PHOTO CREDIT/Rally (USSFAtlanta); Domestic Worker Organizers (Sandy Reid); Mississippi Youth (Jonathan Lawson)



Women are key to social change

Women's position in society makes them a powerful force for change. Today in America, one-third of all families maintained by women live below the poverty level. Families headed by women of color are disproportionately poor. The revolution in the economy is throwing more and more women out of the job market. "Working women are very, very afraid," said an Ohio union worker. Most of us are one negative event away from poverty. Even women like me: I have a Ph.D. but can only find part-time teaching jobs. If my husband dies before I do, I will be destitute."

But, Women's History Month, 2008, will mainly be a time where the achievement of individual women from the corporate or government world such as Condoleezza Rice, Nancy Pelosi, and Hillary Clinton, the first woman running for President, will be lauded. They will be offered as proof that women have achieved their equality.

We have to ask: can women from the upper echelon of society alter the plight of the masses of women who are becoming poorer by the day? They cannot. This is because destitution is endemic to capitalism, a system based on the drive for maximum profit and new labor-replacing technologies. The only solution for women — and for men — is for those who are be-

coming part of the dispossessed class to join with the already dispossessed to overthrow this dying system. The goal must be to create a new social system based on this principle: to each according to their need, from each according to their individual talents and skills. Herein lies the importance of a powerful women's movement.

Let us trace the progression of the women's movement to see how integrally connected is their revolution with the revolution for a new cooperative world.

Like all processes, the women's struggle for equality develops in stages. In early matriarchal societies people lived cooperatively. Women played a leading role in early agricultural societies because production was centered around their work, the gathering of nuts and berries. Once the economy changed, women over a long period of time became separated from the economic processes, increasing their dependency on the men. There could be no reversing this until a new productive process arose.

The invention of the first labor-saving housework tools arose around 1935. With the development of the vacuum, the dishwasher, and the washing machine, women were more free to enter the job market and hence to fight for their equality. However, the massive women's movement that arose in various countries based on the new conditions was a different

movement than we see today. Then, it was a movement for women to become part of the capitalist system. Today, the majority of workers are being forced out of capitalism.

Women today are the numerical majority in society, the majority in the working class and the majority in the new class of destitute here and globally. Consequently, women's position makes them key to social change. For example, no one has to tell the woman in the street with children that those abandoned usable apartments the city is tearing down to create high-end housing should instead house her family. No one has to tell the single mom that society has a responsibility to provide healthcare for all.

The point is that the objective conditions for change exist today. But, without women playing a conscious role, a revolutionary movement cannot be consolidated. It's a question of revolutionary tactics.

International Women's Day, 2008 finds our country at a critical juncture. We are facing a rapidly changing world. The woman question is at the very heart of the formation and politicization of the new class of dispossessed workers. Now is the time for revolutionaries — women and men— to provide the revolution with the indispensable ingredient of change: new ideas! It's time to deliver a new society.

New Book: *Teatro Chicana, A collective Memoir and Selected Plays*, profiles seventeen women in the Chicana Movement in the early 1970s. Laura Garcia wrote a chapter and is available to speak through Speakers for a New America. Signed copies of the book are \$30. Call 800-691-6888 or mail check c/o People's Tribune, PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654.

My broken back...

I hold the world...
or try to...

on my broken back ..

I have carried worlds and toasters —
the guts of a hundred evictions, couches
and king-sized beds
and everything else —
...on my broken back

I have carried the love of some people
and the disdain of others
the hate of a thousand landlords,
welfare workers,
and a few hundred angry creditors..
and my broken family....
....on my broken back

I have carried pain and fear —
time and stress —
confusion and
moments when my face could no longer
smile and my eyes could only leak blood
colored tears



Tiny Gray-Garcia

PHOTO/POOR NEWS NETWORK STAFF

I have seen too much and felt even more
on my broken back —

But it was never supposed to be broken
I was always supposed to carry these
people
and these things
these landlords and these toasters
those creditors and that underwear
my family and even those tears
I was always supposed to be there...

I was always supposed to be ok

Because if my back is broken — and if I
have to stop
then I surely will perish
because backs aren't fixed
and time doesn't heal
and I can't just rest
and I won't be able to slow down —

I can't and won't like other poor women
before me with no health care,
no comfort and no time
who carry their children, their poverty,
their houses and their families
through the jungles of peru, the streets
of brooklyn, India, frisco and Mexico,
who sing and cry and love and heal and
can't ever stop.. to be broken.. no matter
how broken...
their backs...
really are.

— By Tiny Gray-Garcia, founder of
Poor Magazine

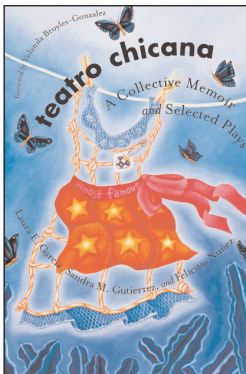
WOMEN IN POVERTY STATISTICS

• Seven out of 10 of the world's hungry are women and girls. More than two-thirds of the world's unpaid work is done by women.

• Two-thirds of children denied primary education are girls. 75% of the world's 876 million illiterate adults are women.

• Of 37 million people living below the poverty line in the US, 21 million are women.

• Almost half of single, Black mothers live below the poverty line. Immigrant women are almost wholly concentrated in the lowest paying jobs.



DETROIT IS THIRSTY!

By Valerie Burris,
Volunteer, Michigan Welfare Rights Union

I got involved when my best girlfriend's Mom got a \$10,000 water bill. She took out a loan to save her home! I said. No. That makes no sense. Then, my own mother got a \$1200 bill. I told the water company this is ridiculous. Where are these numbers coming from? I since found out that over 40,000 homes got water shut off notices. I'm President of my Block Club. This past summer the water company turned off five houses on my block. I called and said wait a minute — water rates continue to go up. It's not that people don't want to pay, they can't. Why turn off water? It's a human right especially since Detroit owns its water (they're trying to privatize it). I started going to the hearings each time they had another increase. People were crying, saying "I can't afford another increase." Now they are starting to attach the water bills to your property taxes. Detroit has not only a high rate of mortgage foreclosures, but tax foreclosures. So a lot of seniors are now in jeopardy of losing their home. Water is a human right and you should be able to have water even if you can't afford it. We are surrounded by water. We put a skit on youtube.com called "Detroit is Thirsty" to help educate people. I also talk to people standing out in the cold, wrapped around the block waiting to pay their water bill. I tell them, we can't just complain. We have to band together! We have to get young people involved too.

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An interview with Nelson Peery, author of ‘Black Radical’

By Patrick R. Saunders

The following is an interview with Nelson Peery, author of the new book, “Black Radical: The Education of an American Revolutionary.”

Patrick R. Saunders: Mr. Peery, as someone who has witnessed and participated in some historic moments of the 20th century, what do you think is the singular event that has continued to impact on people of this country?

Nelson Peery: I think that event was the development of the microchip. This led to the development of labor replacing productive tools and to globalization. These events are changing the world. Societies are based on existing means of production and are organized to facilitate distribution of the means of existence. Change in the means of production begins an era of destruction of the existing social order and finally reconstruction of a new social order compatible with the new means of production. The economic, social and political crises wracking the world today are expressions of the beginnings of this epochal change.

Saunders: Mr. Peery, you saw the labor movement progress from the

30s to the present time. What happened to the dynamism that it had in the early days, and what impact has the loss of this energy had on the working class in the present time?

Peery: Social dynamism is an expression of crisis. From 1929 through 1940 the world was in the grip of a general crisis. It turned inward against itself. To a great extent World War II temporarily resolved the crisis for America. With wartime full employment and profitability, America emerged virtually unscathed from the war with its productive capacity four times that of 1941. As America moved to dominate the world, it gave material incentives to the leading sector of the working class. This established an identity of interest between worker and capitalist. The effort to block class identity has even gone into the realm of language. Today upper, middle and lower class has replaced the concrete terms worker and capitalist. Without class awareness it is impossible for the workers to defend themselves.

Saunders: Can Labor restore its effectiveness as a social movement, and what can rank and file workers do to re-energize the movement at the

local level?

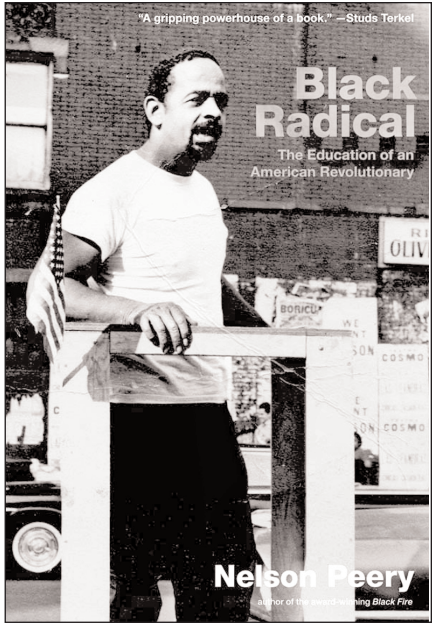
Peery: The restoration of the labor movement will be an inevitable social result of the developing economic crisis. It will not be the same movement as the 1930's. That was led by the then new class — the industrial worker. Another new class — those dispossessed by automation, will lead the new movement. In order to "re-energize the movement at the local level" it is necessary for this new class to understand the real world. Before anything significant happens, the people must break their ideological dependency on their enemy. I'm afraid we are in for a long period of struggle and hardship before this is achieved.

Saunders: How do workers overcome the marginalization by the mainstream media and the promotion of hate and prejudice by the political class in today's world?

Peery: Breaking the marginalization of workers by the mainstream media can only be achieved by organizations dedicated to propaganda. We have an unprecedented concentration of workers in the cities and towns. We have the old tools of the press and "pirate" radio and we have the marvelous new

weapons of the Internet. In the process of struggle, the people will find their way.

Saunders: Thank you for taking time to talk to me on these questions, and if your conversation on these few points is an indicator, I know that your appearance on April 3 at BGSU Firelands will be a wonderful opportunity for the students, faculty and the community at large in our area.



This interview was conducted by Patrick R. Saunders, M.A., Instructor of the Humanities at Bowling Green State University Firelands College in Huron, Ohio. It was done in preparation for an event being held the first week of April at the College to remember the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Saunders, who teaches the American Culture Studies series and is an advisor for the local Chapter of the Young Democratic Socialists of America, also worked for several decades on the railroad as a brakeman and conductor, a local union and community activist, and is a Vietnam Veteran. He has taught at BGSU Firelands since 2003, after completing his graduate degree.

Nelson Peery and Cheri Honkala to Speak April 3 at Bowling Green State University Nelson Peery, author of “Black Radical: The Education of an American Revolutionary,” is slated to be a panel member with Cheri Honkala, National Director of the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign, on April 3 at Bowling Green State University Firelands College in Huron, Ohio, discussing: “Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King: What is Our Progress from the Memphis Strike to the Present and Are American Workers Third World Citizens in Their Own Country?”

Homeless Leaders Come Together in Sacramento

By Cathleen Williams

On a Thursday early in February at Loaves and Fishes, the main service center for homeless people in Sacramento, California, a group of homeless people came together to talk about the need for leadership. They were diverse — both Anglo and African American; young, middle aged and older; women and men. And as they described the problems they faced, it was clear that there is no one answer for homeless people — some have developed skills that allow them to live in hidden places and support themselves through recycling, or the sale of handicrafts, for example; others are homeless because life issues overtook them, and they found themselves unable to afford stable housing.

As the individuals around the table described different personal situations, it was also clear that there is a great need for leadership. Leaders can represent — speak out — on behalf of homeless communities who are trying to establish a safe place to live outdoors — and can protest and change the present policy of arresting and harassing homeless people. Leaders can assert the immediate demands of homeless people.

But how to lead? Several suggestions were made. First, leaders can become active in homeless organizations like the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee, document the violations of the human right to housing and dignity, and encourage others to

become active in community affairs, both in terms of homelessness and other issues that are personally important, like building a sustainable future. There are city boards and commissions where homeless members could contribute their first hand knowledge of the hardships and needs of homeless people.

But to do this, to represent the interests not just of



A sign of the times in Sacramento

PHOTO/PAULA LOMAZZI

the individual but the entire population of homeless people, it's also important for leaders to learn about the context of homelessness....Without understanding the context of homelessness, it's all too easy to blame the individual. The media and the federal government

have publicized the idea that homelessness is a matter of individual failure, rather than acknowledging that since the early eighties — as the homeless population exploded — the federal government has systematically eliminated funding for affordable housing. Now we see in New Orleans that structurally sound public housing is being torn down and people are being housed in tin trailers poisoned with formaldehyde fumes! Also, “blaming the victim” is extremely dangerous for homeless people, because it encourages violence against them.

That it's not just a personal problem can be seen in Ontario, California, where the city fathers decided to permit a tent city on a muddy vacant lot near the airport. In a matter of weeks, in the dead of this winter, over 300 tents sprang up, including seniors and children, all people who simply can't afford apartments or, with the “subprime” mortgage meltdown, have been evicted from their homes. One woman, disabled and out of work, said “I never thought this would happen to me.”

It's up to homeless leaders to point out it's not her fault and it's not just an individual problem. We're all human, we're all vulnerable. We all have a right to dignity and, if we choose, housing; we all have a right to live without harassment just because we are not rich in material things.

Fighting the Demolition of Atlanta’s Public Housing

Editor’s note: Shirley Hightower is the president of the Bowen Homes Residents Association in Atlanta. Bowen Homes has been moved to the top of the list of public housing projects slated for demolition by the Atlanta Housing Authority. Residents have until May 8 to get out. When all of the 12 remaining public housing sites slated for demolition by 2010 are gone, there will be no more public housing left in Atlanta. Her words here were prepared from an interview with Gloria and John Slaughter.

‘Hear the people’s cry!’

By Shirley Hightower

I have lived in Bowen Homes for 16 years and been president for the last six years. Right now residents are being evicted and having their belongings put out on the curb for issues such as the non-payment of rent when they lose their job and haven’t been able to get another job. For these people that means homelessness. The residents who are left are being promised better housing in the private sector with Section 8 vouchers. But we know that more cuts are coming for Section 8 funding, and the waiting list is already a long one. We have perfectly good housing already maintained and renovated.

We understand that this is a national problem. We see the demolition of perfectly good public housing in New Orleans, in Chicago with Cabrini-Green and in Miami and other cities. There seems to be a plan to destroy not only public housing but public transportation, public health care and public education. Whatever happened to “We, the People?” We the people are in public housing.

We are fighting to keep our homes but we have a wicked government.

We are not criminals, although Bowen Homes has been designated a high crime area by the Atlanta Housing Authority as an excuse to step up the plan to demolish our homes. Recently over 100 police raided our homes in the middle of the night, saying they were “looking for drugs.” There is already not enough public housing in Atlanta. Where are we going to go? Public housing is the only thing between us and homelessness.

There is a war going on, and we the people are under attack. Hear the people’s cry! Why are public housing residents being treated this way? Are we really free? What is this really all about? Is this slavery all over again?

I pray to God that the residents face their fear and stand up and speak out and fight for their children. People, fight for your children. Stop the demolitions now!



Shirley Hightower

PHOTO/Boubacar Sarr

US Social Forum Call to Action Answered in Atlanta at Poor People’s Day

By Emery Wright

Initiated by the organizers of the annual Poor People's Day at the Capitol (Georgia Citizens’ Coalition on Hunger, Project South, and the Up & Out of Poverty Now! Coalition) and inspired by the 40th anniversary of the historic Poor People's Campaign for Economic Justice launched by Dr. King in 1968, a multi-issue coalition of grassroots organizations brought the voices and demands of millions of working and poor people to the Georgia State Capitol, January 26th, 2008. We stood side by side with movements holding actions around the world answering the World Social Forum’s call for a Global Day of Action.



Demonstrating during Poor People's Day

PHOTO/EMERY WRIGHT

Poor People’s Day (PPD) at the Georgia Capitol is the legislative expression of a statewide Georgia coalition of grassroots organizations called Up & Out of Poverty Now! and is led by the Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger. In 1980 Poor People’s Day at the Capitol was created by community leaders to give space for poor & working people to meet with state legislators about issues that affect them. In 1991 Up & Out of Poverty Now! Coalition Georgia was founded and co-chaired by Hunger Coalition & Project South to build statewide power that can eliminate poverty in the state of Georgia. In 1995, Poor People’s Day was expanded to holding an education day before the legislative Action day.

Sandra Robertson, Executive Director of the Hunger Coalition reflected on the Day. “Poor People’s Day is a great day. It gives grassroots people the opportunity to give voice to the issues that impact their lives. This year, we were able to engage more people and gain widespread local television news coverage so that it was seen and heard that the people took over the downtown of Atlanta and we sent a resounding and clear message that we’re not happy with elected officials or the policies they produce. We have the power to make change happen and we will.”

In planning the 2008 Poor People’s Day at the Capitol, organizers wanted to expand the mobilization of people and respond to the call to action raised at the United States Social Forum in June 2007, to hold a “People’s Movement Assembly” in your local community. The People’s Movement Assembly process is one way organizations are working to build on the momentum of the first US Social Forum and engage communities to build organizing models to respond to local pressures and increase grassroots power. The date of 2008’s Poor People’s Day was changed to Jan-

uary from February to connect our local demands to coordinated actions happening globally for the World Social Forum Global Day of Action. The 2008 WSF Global Day of Action included hundreds of local actions by grassroots movements occurring simultaneously across the globe on that day.

A People’s Caravan of flatbed trucks, charter buses and vans from all over the state took over downtown Atlanta and raised banners at 6 locations including: Grady Hospital (Healthcare for the People), Atlanta Detention Center (Freedom for the People), MARTA (Accessible Transportation for the People), Luxury condos (Housing for the People), CNN Center (Media for the People), and Atl Public Schools (Education for the People). The Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless staged a Reverse Eviction at the Atlanta Housing Authority to protest the mass evictions and scheduled demolition of Atlanta Public Housing and the huge caravan for liberation converged on the Georgia State Capitol where SPARK (formerly Georgians for Choice) held a Reproductive Justice rally. People came from far and wide across the State of Georgia. Delegations of support came from North Carolina and a nation-wide initiative called Equal Voices for American Families Campaign gave financial support and kicked off their Georgia efforts that day.

The People’s Movement Assembly announced 12 Resolutions for Action that demand community-led changes and will inform the collective work of organizations at the grassroots of Georgia communities.

Slavery In The Fields: Amite, Louisiana

By Ted Quant

Thirty Mexican workers suffering slave-like conditions in the strawberry fields of Bimbo's Best Produce decided they had to stand up for their rights and dignity. They made their decision in the same land where Africans were enslaved and fought slavery and the slave-like peonage* system that continued into modern times. The same conditions are being resurrected and enforced by the isolation and control of the immigrant worker by the employers using the so-called “guest worker program.”

On February 13th, the workers told their stories to a small delegation of African Americans who were asked by the New Orleans Workers' Center to come to the meeting to hear their stories and to support them like the abolitionists had done for enslaved Africans a hundred years ago. Each worker told his story in his own way, but they were all much the same.

“I am from the indigenous community of San Luis Potosin, in Mexico. The conditions there are very poor and there is no work.” US trade agreements have deepened the economic crisis in parts of Mexico and forced these men to become cheap, exploitable workers. “Recruiters came to our community and promised jobs with good pay and working conditions in the U.S. under the

guest worker program. We had to barrow money, \$800 each, in recruitment fees to come to America.” They said “according to the law it would be paid back when we started working.” They said “our wages were governed by the H2A program guidelines and would by law not be less than \$8.01 per hour, the prevailing wage for the area. But that is not what happened. We were brought to Amite, Louisiana on H2A visas in a bus that dropped us off at a Walmart in the middle of the night last winter. We found out that all the promises recruiters had made were false: steady jobs, decent wages, good conditions - none of it was true.”

Instead, Charles Bimbo Relan confiscated their passports and refused to return them in order to hold them in his fields. He constantly changed the piece rate for a box of strawberries so that some days they worked for as little as \$2 an hour. Picking strawberries is back-breaking work - the men are bent down over bushes for hours. When they stopped to stretch, Bimbo yelled that he would deport them back to Mexico. Under U.S. law, these men can only work for Bimbo. Guest workers can only work for one employer. So they had a choice: work under slave-like conditions, or go back to Mexico to joblessness and poverty.

The workers realized they have been

trafficked to the fields of Amite. The workers explained that they wanted to confront their boss and present certain demands collectively because when they have done so individually he has refused and threatened them with deportation.

On Valentine's Day, they walked off the fields to reclaim their dignity. In solidarity, a delegation of African Americans, Damian Remos, Gerald Lenoir, and Ted Quant, empowered to conduct a citizen's arrest under Louisiana law, confronted Charles “Bimbo” Relan, for his felony viola-

tions of U.S. federal laws that define slavery, peonage, human trafficking, and servitude. Bimbo was confronted and forced to give the passports back but he refused to negotiate on his abusive and illegal treatment of the workers. He struck back with a vengeance. He illegally fired the workers and is proceeding with evicting them from the trailers where they were housed.

The workers are continuing their fight. Just before midnight on Valentine's Day, they went on strike, refusing to return to the degrading treatment in his fields.



Louisiana farmworkers demanding their rights.

PHOTO/TAMAR

*Peonage is defined as a former system under which a debtor was forced to work for a creditor until a debt was paid. This looks amazingly like what happens to immigrant workers, who borrow money to pay labor traffickers to come to America to work, and then are trapped in circumstances like those described in the article.

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED

The workers now need your support to continue their struggle. In the coming days, they will pressure the FBI, the Department of Justice, and governments of the U.S. and Mexico to take action. The workers have legal rights, but defending them takes time and money and they will need to survive as they continue to fight for their human rights and dignity. Please make a contribution to their strike fund. You can make checks out to: National Immigration Law Center at National Immigration Law Center, 3435 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 2850, Los Angeles, CA 90010.

Corporate-minded Management Cancels Popular Public Radio Program

By Mike Brand

The Marc Steiner Show, a call-in radio show broadcast from WYPR in Baltimore, Maryland, was a popular, informative program -- a genuine democratic forum. The variety of views presented was extensive. Recent guests included Gov. Martin O'Malley, Speakers Mike Miller, Studs Turkel and Nelson Peery. Callers could and did state their views without censorship or harassment. While Marc expressed his awareness of and sympathy for the impoverished, he made no requirement that callers or guests do the same. That some interpret this as a “political program” is a sad commentary on where we are and how far we have to go.

The show was widely admired. Yet it was cancelled. That the corporate-minded management had the authority to banish this forum is a dangerous attack on freedom of speech. It has been widely protested. As Marc stated on his blog, <http://marcsteinerblog.wordpress.com/2008/02/12/212-from-marc/>, “What has been amazing to me is the di-

versity of this movement that has developed since the station let me go. It has involved inner-city community activists, elected officials, university professors, teachers, social workers, receptionists, truck drivers,



Marc Steiner Protest in Baltimore

PHOTO/BALTIMORE SUN STAFF AMY DAVIS

doctors and lawyers. The station has heard and I have heard from Orthodox Jewish leaders, the head of the African American Muslim Community, Baltimore Hebrew University, ministers of every possible Christian denomination, Arab Americans. It has been Black, White, Asian, Latino, young, old, middle-aged, rich, poor, middle class, gay, straight.

It is everything I ever dreamed and hoped my show would mean. When I began the show in 1993 I said I wanted it to be bridge between worlds and communities. A place where all people and ideas could gather to speak together without fear of ridicule. A lyceum, an agora, a marketplace of ideas. A place where people who would never meet in life could hear and meet each other.”

We live in a dangerous time. Our ability to communicate and debate about what should be done is extremely important. Canceling the Marc Steiner Show limits this ability. It must be effectively protested. I do not know how to accomplish this, but the demonstrations at WYPR daily at noon are a good start.

Autoworkers Prepare for Battle as GM Plans More Cutbacks

By Claire McClinton

With the announcement of record breaking losses (\$38.7 billion for 2007), automaker GM is doing what any other self-respecting corporation does in the global economy — get rid of more jobs and find new sources of cheap labor. After unloading 30,000 plus jobs in 2006 with special attrition/buyout packages then, this time the newly negotiated union contract provides a new opportunity to slash wages. This is what an analyst said after passage of the recent agreement: “We suspect that GM will be back before too long with an agreement of an attrition program geared to induce current non-core workers to retire so they can be replaced with new tier two at about one third the costs.” (Credit Suisse auto analyst Chris Ceraso, in a note to investors back in October 2007).

The analyst was right. GM has rolled out massive attrition packages with hopes to unload thousands of workers and bring in new hires at \$14 per hour (versus \$28 per hour) a la Delphi. This same new worker will not receive a pension or retiree Healthcare (something we won in 1949). Using the carrot (beefy supplemental packages) and the stick (make life so miserable on the factory floor that you can’t wait to get out of there) is all part of doing business to ensure profitability.

Gregg Shotwell, a labor activist, describes the mood in his newsletter Live Bait and Ammo #103 since the contracts passed:

“Workers are stressed. Pressure is relentless. Management adds tasks to jobs already overloaded, speeds up the line, raises rates, runs rampant over work rules, violates seniority rights, disregards production standards, harasses, intimidates, and disciplines. When members call out the union and demand



Delphi Auto Protests in 2006

PHOTO/LABOR DONATED

a grievance, more often than not, the rep says “They can do that. You’re lucky to have a job.”

The urgency with which GM is moving older workers out along with transferring retiree Health care into

The roots of the rash of killings in our schools



Northern Illinois University student Audrey Holmer weeps during a memorial for her former York High School classmate and Northern Illinois University student Dan Parnmenter at Elmhurst Presbyterian Church in Elmhurst, Ill. Feb. 15, 2008.

From the Editors

Another horrible massacre of youth — this time at the University of Northern Illinois — has occurred. Eighty people a day die of gun shot wounds in our country and twice as many are seriously injured. Isn't it time, in the name of humanity, to change a culture and an economy that gorges itself on the blood of our children? Isn't it time to think about the roots of this daily slaughter? To this end the People's Tribune reprints our editorial of November, 2006:

Violence against our children has its roots in a society that promotes profit over human well -being.

"Ten naked little boys, between six and twelve years old, tied together, two and two, by their wrists, were all fastened to a long rope and followed by a tall, gaunt white man, who, with his long lash, whipped up the sad and weary little procession, drove it to the horse-trough to drink, and thence to a shed, where they lay down on the ground and sobbed and moaned themselves to sleep." Frances Seward, wife of Lincoln's secretary of state, wrote this statement (quoted in Doris Kearns Goodwin's "Team of Rivals") after witnessing a group of slave children driven to Richmond to be sold.

Today, 147 years later, the world looks in horror at an America where children are shot at or slaughtered in their schools.

As the professional liars for the ruling class scramble to their damage control posts, they are careful to avoid any discussion of history or environment. They try to present these tragedies as the doings of unbal-

a risky trust fund (VEBA) has created a profound sense of insecurity, fear, and powerlessness among autoworkers. More and more, there is the realization that the middle class dream we once realized is slipping away and cannot be saved at the bargaining table.

In the meantime, Detroit's Wayne County leads the nation in home mortgage foreclosures. In recent weeks, thousands of homeowners have attended workshops, hoping to stave off the disaster. Said one woman attending the event: "I don't want to lose my house. I don't want to live on the streets....I don't want to live with six people in a two bedroom house with my mother." Certainly, the lion's share of the mortgage crisis in Michigan is tied directly and indirectly to the loss of jobs in the automobile industry. Yet, the labor movement seems to have forgotten the Unemployment Councils of the 30's, who moved evicted families back into their homes.

Those union leaders who believe that the needs of capital must be met first before wages and benefits can be secured for the workers will continue to go to the bargaining table and come back empty handed. Some of us are waking up to the realities that we must take up these battles on our own and are joining such efforts as fighting for universal health care, moratoriums on foreclosures, abolition of two tier and more.

More on these efforts next time.

VOICES FROM BENTON HARBOR, MI

IT’S NOT THE ‘MESSENGER’ WHO IS A LIAR

By Dorothy Pinkney

In America, we were given the right to free speech. That right is protected by law and the enforcers of the law. If someone should take away those rights, the government is to provide protection.

Not so with my husband, Rev. Edward Pinkney. His freedom of speech was violated on December 14, 2007 by his probation officer, James B. Pjesk and by Berrien County government, which is run by the dominant corporation in the area, Whirlpool.

Remember, my husband is a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a strong leader and well-known activist in Berrien County since 2000. His message was against injustice, corporate power, racism, and a call to Repentance. Berrien County Government says his message was a threat and he therefore remains in the Berrien County Jail.

I ask, why did Berrien County allow

the KKK the right to organize a rally in 1998? Why were they given the right to free speech? Why were they protected by law enforcement? And yet Berrien County can tell my husband that he has no rights to free speech or to organize citizens for a successful recall election against former commissioner Glen Yarbrough. One step further – they are saying that the citizens have no rights therefore we’re discarding your votes. The message is that they have the right to take your rights, lock you up in inhumane jail conditions, serve cold food, put you on lock-down, take away visitation rights, block your phone calls, charge you \$150 for a GED, \$150 for medical fees, or \$25 for a doctor fee. Judge Butzbaugh took a prophetic Biblical warning given in a newspaper article as a threat, therefore establishing his own law, sentencing my husband to a year. When a prophetic warning is given by God and it’s rejected, when given by His messenger – it’s not the messenger who is a liar.

You’re saying God is a liar. What Judge, government officials or anyone else can come against God’s truth — the Bible? The Judge erred when he stated the article was intimidating and threatening, but the subjected of a listener can’t create a threat where none exists.

We cannot allow the court system to take away our rights. We must stand together on Biblical Truth. We stand on the truth of the polygraph test proving my husband’s innocence of all charges and that he’s in jai for a crime he never committed.

The purpose of the speech-press clauses is to protect parties in the free publication of matters of public concern and to secure their rights to a free discussion of public concern, public events, public measure and to enable every citizen to bring the government to the bar of public opinion by any just criticism upon their conduct in the exercise of the authority, which the people have conferred upon them.



Rev. Edward and Dorothy Pinkney outside Court House

PHOTO/DAYMON J. HARTLEY

Jail or Concentration Camp?

In a waiting room for prisoner’s families and friends at the Berrien County Jail in St. Joseph, Michigan, visitors discuss the condition of the jail — the MRSA virus, and the filth. Most disgusting, families say little black worms come out of the prisoner’s shower-head, the shower drain and around the toilet. They say it’s like sewage that was never cleansed. Everything inside the overcrowded jail is dirty, with poor air ventilation and inmates sleeping on the gym floor, meaning there is no daily exercise for the prisoners. GED degrees and even doctor visits are too costly for the poor who make up the jail population.

The concentration camp conditions in American jails await not only the victims of poverty, but also anyone who dares to speak out against injustice. We are slipping rapidly into a Nazi-type America. The stakes are high. Capitalism, a system based on the exploitation of human labor, no longer has any use for workers now that computers and robots are taking the jobs. Are jails and concentration camps our future? No. Our hope is in building a massive movement for a just society, but it has to be fought for.

— The Editors

Jail Visitor Speaks Out

"On our first visit, my son and I got to the Berrien County jail at 12:30 p.m. There was a long line of people waiting in the cold. One-half hour later the door opened and the people rushed in to get warm. It took almost an hour to sign in at one window. There were limited seats in the waiting area and many people stood for as long as two hours waiting to visit. We were told to go to the first floor and we had to wait about 20 more minutes for the previous group to leave. The telephones were filthy and there were interruptions on the phone lines. This is an unforgettable experience." — Patricia Johnson

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A struggle for Justice against Corporate Power

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Berrien County Courthouse

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